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LIBERALISM IN RELIGION

By

REV. M. H. MacINERNY, O. P.

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Archbishop of Boston

Deacidified

Liberalism in Religion.

By REV. M. H. MacINERNY, O.P.

Liberalism in religion is a somewhat elusive entity. Like Proteus in the fable, it is capable of assuming a thousand different forms. Under all its diversified shapes, however, it is invariably the enemy of orthodox Christianity—for Liberalism is, in fact, only Rationalism in disguse.

As this pamphlet is intended for what the Germans style "weitere Kreise"—for the public at large—it may be well to emphasize the fact that Liberalism in religion is not necessarily connected with Liberalism in politics. A man may be a Tory or a Socialist in politics, and yet be a Liberal in religion. Neither is there any essential bond of union between religious Liberalism and what is known as Continental Liberalism. Your Liberal on the Continent is too often a

Freemason, an infidel, and a persecutor of religion; your Liberal in religion, in these English-speaking lands, is a Freethinker who labors under the amiable delusion that he is a Christian.

Liberalism in religion assumes a multiplicity of forms. At one time it is identical with what we now term Modernism; at another it is merely a flattering designation for Unitarian heterodoxy. At one moment it passes under the name of Broad-Churchism; at another, it is synonymous with Latitudinarianism, or with Indifferentism, or even with certain aspects of the Higher Criticism. But, whatever the garb in which Liberalism chooses to masquerade, it is ever the foe of dogmatic Christianity; it is perpetually striving to sap and undermine "the faith once delivered to the saints."

The distinguished Anglican, Canon Knox-Little, observes with much truth that the ideal of Liberalism is difficult to define. "It is vague, it is elusive, it is changeful. Some upholders of it go farther than others. Some shrink from the exact statements of a dogmatic faith; others openly disbelieve much that the Church teaches, and explain away its clearest and most unequivocal statements; some are at the bottom of the decline; some only half-way down; some only at the beginning of the descent. They are, however, at one on certain points. While some hold parts of the Catholic Faith which happen to commend themselves to their minds at the moment, they are really

out on the open sea, and may be driven by any chance current or changeful wind."*

Liberalism has obtained a powerful hold upon the Anglican clergy, and probably a still firmer hold upon many ministers of the Dissenting sects. It has captured the English Universities. It has become responsible for a vast increase of indifferentism and irreligion in the country generally. The rationalistic methods of Liberals, and their sceptical conclusions, have powerfully affected the atmosphere of thought and practice in Protestant circles. Doubt, questioning, and indifference reign throughout the country, and make their pernicious influence felt in lands beyond the sea. Canon Knox-Little bears witness that the achievements of Liberals in the domain of Higher Criticism

"are fast shaking the English people out of the one staunch belief that clings to them more tenaciously than all others, when so much of their religion was 'dragooned' out of them —belief in the Holy Scriptures. The [Anglican] Bishops complain of the neglect of 'keeping Sunday,' of an increase of civilized or uncivilized Paganism in what are called 'the higher classes,' and of an increase of commercial dishonesty in the commercial classes; of a diminution in the number of candidates for Holy Orders, of 'the absence of men from church.'"*

The same truths were expressed, with far greater force and acumen, by the venerated Cardinal Manning, nearly fifty years ago:

* "The Conflict of Ideals in the Church of England," pp. 75, 76.
* Ibid., p. 80.

"Never before were the masses of our people so without God in the world; never was spiritual famine so widespread and so blank. Millions in our towns and cities have no consciousness of the supernatural. The life of this world is their all.

"Never before were the schisms and heresies which have been generated by the first great heresy and schism so manifold and dominant. The Church of the Anglican Reformation has given up well-nigh half its people to the endless separations, which have exhausted its vitality.

"Never before were the internal and diametrical contradictions among its teachers and guides so ripe and unrelenting; never the confusion and uncertainty, the mistrust and weariness of heart so widespread and oppressive among its people.

"Never was its own impotence to rule, its incapacity to teach, so proved and manifest. It cannot judge, it cannot decide; it may not legislate; it dares not solve its own perplexities; it has not mind or courage to define its own doctrine. There is no voice to be heard; no Divine certainty, no Divine guide in the seat of its councils.

"And lastly, never was there a time when the public opinion, the supreme infallibility which guides and teaches in England, was so absolute in its will. It is bearing all before it down the stream to a deeper indfference to all positive revelation. Struggle as they may, all must go down as the current runs. No human will can stay its course, no human intelligence avert its vehement descent. Rationalistic Protestantism is the natural end and term of all that moves around us."†

The same illustrious writer accentuates the fact that Rationalism is the inevitable outcome of Protestantism:

"The more I have studied the religious and political history of England since the Anglican Reformation, and the more I have observed the currents of thought, the dominant

† "Sermons on Ecclesiastical Subjects," pp. 141, 142.

tendencies in English society at this day, the more I have become convinced that the English people are upon an inclined plane. Men may strive to retard their descent, but it is inevitable. The laws of nature are not more irresistible and unerring than the law which generates unbelief from the first principle of private judgment. Even in our own lifetime, the advance of indifference, rationalism, infidelity, secularism, and atheism, both objective and subjective, is vast and perceptible. The last ten years have developed these evils as with a tropical growth. . . . I trace this development of intellectual, social, and spiritual anarchy to one cause—separation from the Holy See—because separation from the Holy See is separation from the Universal Church, and to be separated from the Church is to be deprived of its Divine guidance and support."*

Protestantism is the parent of Liberalism, Indifferentism, Rationalism, Secularism and Atheism—an evil brood. These are the factors that have produced the present condition of intellectual, social, and spiritual anarchy in England. Fifty years ago Manning was alarmed by the growing power, and the menacing attitude, of Liberalism. It is noteworthy that the men whom Manning then denounced as Rationalists are now commonly referred to as Liberals,—a fact which indicates that Liberalism, at best, is only diluted Rationalism.

"It is remarkable [wrote Manning] "that at this moment a recoil, the most pronounced, formidable, and reasoned, as well as the most extensive, and extending towards rationalistic unbelief, which has ever been known in England since the Reformation, has developed itself. It must not be indeed supposed that rationalism did not already exist in the Anglican Church. The germs of it were deep in its original foundation, and had widely, but informally, spread them-

* Ibid., p 25.

selves. All that is new at this time is its systematic expression, and its logical relation to the state of religious belief in England. There can be no doubt that the controversies of the last thirty years have resolved the question of religious belief for all intelligent minds in this country into its ultimate analysis. It is a simple question between Rome and rationalism, between the Divine certainty of faith and the instability of human opinion; between the presence of a Divine Teacher and the solitude and darkness of the human soul. They who have watched the development of the religious intellect, so to speak, of the English people, in the last years, can fix with certainty upon the period when this alternative became a public and practical question, and they have noted the immediate reaction which threw itself back in the direction of German criticism, as the only assignable reason for not submitting to the Catholic Church."*

If Liberalism was powerful half a century ago, it is vastly more formidable to-day. It has advanced far beyond the position which it held in the forties and fifties. Its efforts in the two Universities have been crowned with complete success. Oxford and Cambridge are now "only in a very modified sense Christian at all." The Liberals have succeeded in wresting even such institutions as Keble College and Pusey House from the Catholic-minded High-Churchmen who founded and endowed them. Furthermore, the Liberals have succeeded beyond all their hopes, first in breaking up the Oxford Movement, then in almost annexing the places of authority in the Anglican Church, and, finally, in so affecting the more prominent of modern Oxford Ritualists that these have become little more than Liberals in disguise.†

* Ibid., pp. 60, 61.
† Knox-Little, "Conflict of Ideals," pp. 78, 79, 168.

It is a curious fact that the modern Liberal movement, no less than the Tractarian movement, originated in the University of Oxford. "So early as the year 1835," writes Cardinal Manning, "at the outset of the Oxford, or so-called Catholic, movement in the Anglican Church, an opposition arose on the part of certain men of high intellectual cultivation, who had imbibed the spirit and system of the German Rationalism. This school was headed by Arnold, the intimate friend of Bunsen." This Liberal school—as the Angelical Dean Church observes—was destined to become the most formidable rival of the Tractarians; its leaders were eventually to succeed, where the Tractarians had failed, in becoming the masters and leaders of the University. "Liberalism had hitherto been represented in Oxford, "Dean Church tells us, in forms which were "unattractive, sometimes even repulsive." The older Liberals were "dry, cold, supercilious, critical"; often "they were poor in character, Liberals from the zest of sneering and mocking." "But," continues the same writer, "a younger set of men brought, mainly from Rugby and Arnold's teaching, a new kind of Liberalism. It was much bolder and more independent than the older forms"; it was "more suspicious and daring in its criticism."

The Liberals of the new school fraternized with Dissenters, and regarded Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and other modes of church government as mere matters of varying convenience. The new Liberalism was

destined to become dominant in Oxford; it soon began to astonish old-fashioned Anglicans with new and deep forms of doubt, more audacious than anything that had ever been put forward by the Tractarians.* The Tractarian movement was constructive; the Liberal movement was essentially destructive. Gradually the Liberals gained ground; they hounded Newman out of Oxford; they recast from top to bottom the institutions of the University.

"The men who had driven me from Oxford were distinctly the Liberals," wrote the illustrious Cardinal, many years later; "it was they who had opened the attack upon Tract 90, and it was they who would gain a second benefit, if I went on to retire from the Anglican Church."†

Newman, happily, *did* retire from Anglicanism; and it is scarcely too much to say that his conflict with Liberalism ended only with his life. When raised to the Cardinalate in 1879, after thanking the Holy Father for the distinguished honor conferred upon him, Newman spoke these remarkable words:

"And I rejoice to say, to one great mischief I have from the first opposed myself. For thirty, forty, fifty years, I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of Liberalism in religion. Never did the Holy Church need champions against it more sorely than now, when, alas! it is an error overspreading as a snare the whole earth; and on this great

* Dean Church, "The Oxford Movement," chap. xix.; Knox-Little, "Conflict of Ideals," pp. 76-78.

† Cardinal Newman, "Apologia pro Vita Sua," popular edit., p. 126.

occasion, when it is natural for one who is in my place to look out upon the world and upon the Holy Church as it is, and upon her future, it will not, I hope, be considered out of place if I renew the protest against it which I have so often made.

"Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another; and this is the teaching which is gaining substance and force daily. It is inconsistent with the recognition of any religion as true. It teaches that all are to be tolerated, as all are matters of opinion. Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact—not miraculous; and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy."*

The context of a passage quoted above will throw additional light upon Newman's attitude towards Liberalism. In the great Cardinal's view, Liberalism is "the anti-dogmatic principle"; it is "the half-way house on the way to Atheism": "The most oppressive thought, in the whole process of my change of opinion, was the clear anticipation, verified by the event, that it would issue in the triumph of Liberalism. Against the anti-dogmatic principle I had thrown my whole mind; yet now I was doing more than anyone else could do to promote it. I was one of those who had kept it at bay in Oxford for so many years; and thus my very retirement was its triumph. . . . As I have already said, there are but two alternatives, the way to Rome, and the way to Atheism; Anglicanism is the half-way house on the one side, and Liberalism is the half-way house on the other. How many men

* Quoted by MacLaughlin, "Is One Religion as Good as Another?" p. 12.

were there, as I knew full well, who would not follow me now in my advance from Anglicanism to Rome, but would at once leave Anglicanism and me for the Liberal camp."†

That many of these men deserted Newman, and sought refuge in the Liberal camp, is unhappily only too true. Such men, as Cardinal Manning observes, betook themselves to "German criticism, as the only assignable reason for not submitting to the Catholic Church. Men who are now [1863] prominent in the anti-Catholic movement in England, especially in public life, were once on its frontier, and parted from their former colleagues and convictions, actually on the threshold of its unity, I may say ad limina apostolorum."*

The Liberals hounded Newman out of Oxford; they gained a fresh accession of strength through his retirement from Anglicanism. Oxford and Cambridge had been indoctrinated with Liberal views, chiefly by the young men whom Arnold sent up from Rugby. When Newman had gone, Liberalism triumphed all along the line. In a few years Liberal unbelief found expression in a remarkable and notorious volume, entitled, "Essays and Reviews." It was the joint production of seven Anglican writers, six of whom were clergymen holding office as professors, or other ecclesiastical or academical trusts. Considered as an expression of views current among a considerable section of the Anglican clergy; considered as an expression of views prevailing extensively in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, as well as in England at large, the book was of a nature to take one's breath away.

†Newman, "Apologia," p. 126.
*Manning, "Sermons on Eccl. Subjects," p. 61.

A friendly reviewer thus enumerated the articles of Christian faith denied, called into question, or disparaged in the volume, and his verdict was fully corroborated by the report of a committee appointed to examine the book by the Anglican Convocation, or Synod of the so-called province of Canterbury:—"In their ordinary, if not plain, sense, these have been discarded—the Word of God, the Creation, the Redemption, Justification, Regeneration, Salvation, Miracles, Inspiration, Prophecy, Heaven and Hell, Eternal Punishment, a day of Judgment, Creeds, Liturgies, Articles, the truth of Jewish History, and Gospel Narrative. A sense of doubt is thrown over even the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension, the Divinity of the Second Person, the Personality of the Third."†

This is a comprehensive specimen of Liberal unbelief; so comprehensive, indeed, that hardly anything is left undenied. One naturally wonders whether these Christian clergymen believed in any microscopic fragment of Christianity at all. One of the chief of these unbelieving writers, a certain Dr.

† Quoted by Card. Manning, "Sermons on Eccl. Subjects," p. 51.

Williams, was summoned before the Court of Arches, the highest ecclesiastical tribunal in the Anglican Church, excepting only the Sovereign in Council. Fifteen highly heretical articles were exhibited against this Anglican ecclesiastic. Twelve of them were dismissed, whereby the Court of Arches, directly or indirectly, declared that these twelve heresies might with impunity be taught by the Anglican clergy. The learned judge declared, in the course of his judgment, that any Anglican clergyman may lawfully deny the inspiration of any part or parts of the Scriptures, as long as he does not deny the inspiration of any entire book. An Anglican minister may, therefore, deny the inspiration of all of every book except some residuum of each, so that the name of the book be still retained in the Canon.*

Upon this amazing decision Cardinal Manning comments as follows:—

"I need not stay to point out that this is pure and essential Rationalism. The members of the Church of England may reject or retain what they will, some more and some less, of the Scriptures; but all that is hereby rejected is rejected on the principle of Rationalism—i. e., of the critical reason: all that is retained is retained upon the principle of Rationalism—that is, of human testimony tried by the same criterion. The individual is by necessity rationalistic in the use of the liberty permitted to him; and the Church of England is equally rationalistic, both in the principle on which it permits that liberty and in the position it has assumed in the sixth article towards the Scriptures and the Church. This judgment, therefore, has an importance far beyond any that has yet been given. It is far more rationalistic than the

* Manning, "Sermons on Eccl. Subjects," pp. 49-53.

'Essays and Reviews,' and it is more final and fatal in its operations, inasmuch as it is not the wandering of private individuals, but the authoritative promulgation of Rationalism as the basis of the Established Religion by its highest ordinary tribunal in ecclesiastical matters. And not a voice, so far as I can find, has been raised by any one of all the schools of Anglican Protestantism against it."*

After the delivery of this judgment, a remarkable illustration of the essentially Rationalistic and destructive character of Liberalism was given by Dr. Colenso, the Anglican Bishop of Natal. That Liberal prelate, in a work on the Pentateuch, denied that the Books of Moses were written by Moses; he likewise denied that the Books themselves are credible as history. Dr. Colenso, nevertheless, professed his heartfelt belief in the Revelations of the Old and New Testaments, but rested his belief upon the subjective convictions of his own spiritual consciousness—in other words, upon mere arbitrary subjectivism.

* Ibid., p. 54.—The "Essays and Reviews" were first published in February, 1860. The first essay in the volume was by Dr. Temple, then Head Master of Rugby, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. The last was by Professor Jowett. The other five Essayists were Dr. Rowland Williams, Professor Baden-Powell, the Rev. H. B. Wilson, Mr. C. W. Goodwin, and the Rev. Mark Pattison. An appeal was lodged against the decision of the Court of Arches, with the result that a still more Rationalistic judgment was obtained from the Privy Council. That final judgment was delivered by the Lord Chancellor on February 8th, 1864. The Free-thinking opinions expressed by Dr Williams and Mr. Wilson were declared not to be inconsistent with the Articles and formularies of the Church of England. The decision was regarded, very naturally by many earnest men as "soul-destroying" (Prothero's "Life of Dean Stanley," chaps. xvi. and xxi.)

Many changes have taken place since Dr. Colenso's time. Rationalism, for one thing, has become less overbearing and less self-confident. Still, the Liberals of our time are Rationalistic enough, in all conscience. "We have found," writes Canon Knox-Little, that the Liberals "desire a re-statement of the Church's dogmas; that they have a strong dislike to dogma; and that their view appears to be that the task of modern theology is to turn inside out the teachings of the Church and re-sort them so as to suit the 'modern mind.' We have noticed that they have no belief in Episcopacy as a Divine institution, although they are interested in it sentimentally, so to speak, as reminding them of the past."*

From the same authority we learn that the whole teaching of Anglican Liberals "tends, sometimes consciously and even blatantly, sometimes perhaps unconsciously (1), to make the shifting positions of individual criticism, instead of the rulings of the Catholic Church, the external court of appeal in matters of revealed truth; and (2) they encourage that tendency to Pelagianism, or semi-Pelagianism (i.e., self-reliance, instead of reliance on the grace of God), which is so common in the English race; and (3) they lower the idea of the supernatural, they 'prune away or economize the supernatural'—as Dr. Liddon would say—and so tend to make the English Church even more naturalistic, more sympathetic with unbelief, less encouraging to a strong belief in the Unseen, than it has been already since the Reformation—which is saying a great deal."†

* "Conflict of Ideals," p. 112.

Eleven years ago "a most learned and distinguished dignitary of the Church of England, deservedly well known for his sound and valuable scholarship, both on the Continent and at home," wrote to Dr. Frederick George Lee as follows:—

> "With you, I cannot but feel that these days contrast in many respects unfavorably with the earlier times of our ministry. There is so much unsoundness in the grasp of doctrine, as shown in the silly acceptance of groundless speculations on the Old Testament, and in idle submission to eccentric and destructive theories on the New Testament, as well as absence of talent amongst the clergy. . . . Add to this that real zeal of a self-denying character is sapped at the foundation in Oxford and elsewhere, by the un-Christian and anti-Christian philosophy which has prevailed so powerfully and now so long."‡

This scathing verdict on the Liberals is perhaps equalled in severity by what Canon Knox-Little himself writes: "The fact is, in the English Church at present, *Theology* is well-nigh dead. We can scarcely find a theologian; we have 'critics' unnumbered. Speculators, starting from assumptions of their own concocting, are taking the place of theologians who started from the revelation entrusted to the Church as data. *Speculation* has supplanted theology."*

† Ibid., pp. 170, 171.
‡ Dr. F. G. Lee, "The Ecclesiastical Situation in 1899," pp. 23, 24.
* "Conflict of Ideals," p. 148

These "critics" speak a dialect of their own, which renders them easily recognizable. They are continually assuring us that "the essential facts of Christianity need to be expressed in terms of contemporary thought"; that "the modern Christian community has outgrown old forms"—i. e., Creeds; that "the Church is an invisible society"; that "the great conflict of the present moment is a conflict betwween the visible and the invisible Church"; that the Creeds have nothing to offer us except "abstruse speculative conceptions, into which it is impossible for simple, practical Christian experience to follow them"; that, therefore, "the Creeds have no claim to finality"; that "religious experience is no longer to be dependent on infallible institutions, infallible books, infallible dogmas"—and so forth, and so on. The wide-reaching unbelief that breathes through these and suchlike utterances is obvious to everyone.

The essential facts of Christianity, when re-stated by these Liberals, turn out to be essential fictions. Too often these Liberal "critics" attempt to degrade Our Lord to the level of a mere man; too often they represent theBible as mainly a collection of exploded myths; too generally they wage a bitter warfare against the ancient and venerable Creeds of Christendom.

As might have been expected, Broad-Churchmen, Congregationalists, and Unitarias, are in the van of this unbelieving movement. The "New Theology" of

that prominent Congregational minister, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, with the ridicule it cast upon the Virgin Birth of Our Blessed Lord, is fast securing a following among Protestant preachers, especially among those of the Congregationalist persuasion. The language of these preachers, in reference to Holy Scripture, is what might be expected from an infidel like Ingersoll, but hardly from a minister of the Gospel. Mr. Campbell's attitude towards the Bible may be surmised from this remarkable extract: "The supposed authority of the Bible is a great hindrance to truth. It is no 'impregnable rock.' . . . Belief in an infallible book is impossible. When a modern preacher dramatically declares that he takes his stand and bases his gospel on the infallible book, he is either a fool or—a rhetorician."

Mr. Campbell is, after all, merely pushing Protestant errors to their logical issue. Being a Protestant, he disbelieves in the infallible Church founded by Jesus Christ, and perpetually guided by the Divine Spirit of Truth—he rejects the teaching authority of the "Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the truth." The Church of God teaches us that the Bible is inspired throughout, and therefore infallible when properly understood. But Mr. Campbell and Protestants generally reject the Church's testimony. In consequence, they find themselves utterly unable to prove that the Bible is inspired from the first page to the last. Realizing, on the other hand, their utter

inability to prove the inspiration of the Bible, and lending a credulous ear to the carping criticism of unbelievers on the other, it is no wonder that Mr. Campbell and many other Protestants should have ended by renouncing all belief in the Bible as an "infallible book."

Mr. Campbell's peculiar type of unbelief seems to be a blend of Pantheism with German Rationalism. His errors have made considerable headway even in Australia, especially among the ministers and layfolk of his own denomination. In South Africa, likewise, the Congregationalists betray symptoms of Campbellism, or some equally malignant form of religious Liberalism. Witness the following extract from an address recently delivered by the Rev. D. M. Whyte, Chairman of the Congregational Union at Johannesburg: "We recognize that the theological ship can no longer keep afloat carrying her old doctrines in water-tight compartments. There must be a readjustment of the compass in the light of the best modern skill and the clearest modern research. We must prayerfully, but fearlessly, jettison all that retards progress or produces lopsidedness."

The sects have long since thrown overboard many of the priceless truths of the Christian religion; now they display a feverish anxiety to be rid of the few fragments of Christianity which they had hitherto retained. In a short time they will find themselves reduced to the plight of the German Lutherans, as

described by the famous Dr. Tholuck in a letter to Dr. Pusey more than fifty years ago. "Our preachers," wrote Dr. Tholuck, "having got rid of the Christian doctrines by means of the Higher Criticism, are now insisting with much earnestness upon the importance of taking regular exercise."*

Happily, there are still a good many Protestants who regard "regular exercise," and even the "New Theology," as pitifully poor substitutes for the saving truths of Christianity. There are many among them like the Rev. A. Brown, in England, who, after reading the new Liberal heresies, indignantly exclaimed: "These are doctrines of demons, and are Satanic. Behind the New Theology is the old devil! Any simpleton can make a mark of interrogation against the Bible, and that is what the New Theologians are doing."

At the same time, it is only fair to recognize that the unbelieving "New Theologians" are merely following the Protestant principle of private interpretation to its logical issue. They are more consistent in error than their Protestant brethren, and, therefore, farther from the truth. The principle of private interpretation leads logically and necessarily to Rationalism and religious anarchy. As a distinguished Catholic journalist has pointed out, "It is as dangerous for any religious body to sanction the free interpretation of

* Quoted by Canon Liddon, "Some Elements of Religion," popular edit., p. 23.

the Bible as it would be for the State to allow individuals to interpret her laws, and administer them according to their own sweet whim and pleasure."†

A favorite Liberal plea is that "we must progress in religion, as well as in art and science and government." The trouble with these Liberals is that in religion they are content to progress crab-wise. Their "progress" consists in rejecting the fundamental truths of Christianity. What should we think of the mathematician who should reject the greater part of the multiplication table, under pretence of promoting the advancement of mathematics? Yet this is exactly similar to what the Liberals are doing. Under pretext of promoting the progress of religion, they are denying the Divinity of Our Lord, the Virgin Birth, the Creeds, and so on.

One would imagine, from Liberal utterances, that the Redeemer of the world meant His teaching to endure for nineteen centuries alone, and that in the twentieth a new series of up-to-date doctrines should be discovered by "critics," who never manage to agree among themselves. As the Rev. D. M'Dermott has justly said: "There is no more reason why the soul, because of modern progress, should need up-to-date doctrines to work out its salvation than that the body should need an up-to-date sun, air and earth to provide for its life. The same sun, air, and earth that are

† Rev. John O'Mahony, D.D., in Tasmanian "Monitor," from whom a few of these citations are taken.

necessary for the existence of man to-day were necessary thousands of years ago. Doctrines which saved the soul in the day of St. John are sufficient to save it to-day."

A recent instance of the deplorable length to which Liberals carry their unbelief is afforded by a work lately published by an Anglican dignitary. The book is entitled "Jesus According to St. Mark"; its author is the Rev. J. M. Thompson, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, Dean of Divinity in the same College, and Examining Chaplain to the Anglican Bishop of Gloucester. Orthodox critics have been so shocked by the views of this Oxford Don that they have not hesitated to denounce his book as blasphemous. What are we to think of an influential and many-titled Anglican cleric who is reported as roundly denying the Divinity of Christ Our Lord? What are we to think of a Dean of Divinity and Examining Chaplain who, it appears, not only asserts that Christ is not truly God, but likewise adds that He was not even a perfect man, and that He shared much of the ignorance and many of the imperfections of His contemporaries and countrymen? The vast majority of professed Rationalists are accustomed to speak more respectfully of Our Lord than this Liberal Clergyman is reported to have done. As the Beloved Disciple is not above his Divine Master, it is no wonder that St. John receives scant courtesy from this unbeleving critic. The fourth Gospel is, of course, declared to be historically impos-

sible, and St. John, we are cooly assured, would not hesitate in telling a lie if it happened to suit "his dogmatic purpose." After these specimens of the Rev. Dr. Thompson's unbelief, we may easily surmise "what an infidel school of aspirants to the Anglican ministry will grow up under his supervision."*

This agnostic Liberalism—call it Modernism if you will—is eating into the vitals of English Protestantism. It is the main cause of the present dearth of candidates for the Anglican ministry. Why should men be ordained if they are to have no certainty of a Divine message to impart—if they can exercise only a "provisional faith" in the Bible itself? Some day, forsooth, they shall receive an authoritative decision as to the credibility of the Bible from an unknown "court of trained experts." But the decision, if given, would be of little worth. As Canon Knox-Little says: "By the time one expurgated Bible was settled by the 'experts,' another set of 'trained experts' would be cutting it to pieces and preparing a fresh edition with further alterations. There would be no end to the energy of wild speculations arising out of baseless assumptions. When the Church is put aside as a witness and keeper of Holy Writ, as a witness of religious observances and duties, as a witness of a changeless message from God to man, then the 'think what you like' of Liberalism is very soon translated into 'do what you like' by the average man."†

* Dr. J. O'Mahony, in Tasmanian "Monitor," Jan. 7, 1910. See also the issue of the same journal for December 31, 1909.
† "Conflict of Ideals," p. 80.

All this is one of the inevitable results of Protestantism; it is the inevitable outcome of private judgment. The self-styled Reformers of the 16th century, in their revolt against the Catholic Church, took the Bible as the foundation of all their new creeds. They made the Bible, as interpreted by private judgment, the final arbiter upon all religious questions. "The Bible, and the Bible alone," was the battle cry, as it is still the cry of the more *naive* and less enlightened portion of the Protestant world. Meanwhile, the Higher Criticism has appeared upon the scene. By its aid the Liberals are waging incessant warfare against the credibility of the Bible, and seeking to dissolve Christianity into an idle dream. Many of them deny or disparage the sacred truths concerning Our Lord's Birth, Miracles, and Resurrection. Creeds in general are supremely distasteful to men of the Liberal school; the Athanasian Creed is the object of their pertinacious and ever-renewed attacks; even the Apostles' Creed itself does not escape their censure.

In a remarkable passage, Canon Knox-Little justly attributes "the rise of the Higher Criticism, with all its enormities, to the Protestantism of the sixteenth century. Protestantism, as a *system*, is incipient unbelief. It sets aside the teaching of the Church. It makes the individual the judge of all things. It has no reason to be angry when its principles have been carried out. It wrung the Sacred Writings out of the hands of the Church who alone could interpret them,

and its principles have been followed out until the Bible has been left the shreds and tatters in which we find it."*

The Bible has been reduced to a thing of shreds and patches by the Liberals, and Christianity itself has fared no better at their hands. If we ask them, "What is Christianity?" we shall receive a multitude of diverse and conflicting replies. As Canon Knox-Little observes, the Liberals are all "at sixes and sevens" on the question: "So far as anything can be discovered from their various writings, [Liberal 'Christianity'] bears but a faint resemblance to what has been supposed to have a right to that title in the past. Sometimes it is a philosophy; sometimes it is a rigid interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount—which not one of them literally obeys."* Sometimes, again, it is an "experience," or Heaven knows what.

Canon Knox-Little sets before us a portrait-gallery of Anglican Liberals, some of whom are even more sceptical than Dr. Arnold or Dean Stanley—which is saying a good deal. The late Dr. Cheyne, for instance, was about as Rationalistic in his methods as man could well be. Yet he held the Oriel Professorship of Interpretation in the University of Oxford, and was, moreover, a Canon of Rochester Cathedral. This did not prevent his throwing "the ægis of his authority over the *Biblia Critica*, the chief aim of which

* "Conflict of Ideals," pp. 118-119.
* Ibid., p. 100.

would almost appear to be to disprove the doctrine of the Divinity of Our Lord, though the more frank utterances there would seem really less disingenuous than the cautious statements of many of the 'Liberals.' "†

"Canon Cheyne," as we are told by his brother Canon of Worcester, "is, of course, the crowning glory of the Higher Criticism in England. His book, 'Bible Problems,' from its unbridled imaginativeness, its total want of logical consecutiveness, and its (unconscious) humorous seriousness, is a very 'Alice in Wonderland' of the Higher Criticism. It need hardly be added that, with perfect good temper and a sublime calmness, it throws overboard most things believed in Creed or Scripture by the Church of England"‡—as well as by the Catholic Church.

Dr. Cheyne, it need hardly be added, was principal editor of the notorious "Encyclopædia Biblica," which has been called the *chef d'oeuvre* of the Anglican Church in the department of Higher Criticism. "One cannot read this last and crowning production of a decaying religious organization," observes a Catholic critic, "without again and again rubbing one's eyes, and asking oneself whether the whole thing will not turn out to be some hideous dream, some terrible mental delusion. The entire supernatural structure of the Christian faith gone—gone beyond all hope of

† "Conflict of Ideals," p. 132.
‡ Ibid., p. 140.

recovery, and of the life and teaching of the Incarnate Son of God nothing left but the record of the few external events, from the admitted correctness of which it may certainly still be gathered that a man, to whom a later age erroneously attributed Divine characteristics, in all probability existed, and perished by crucifixon, once upon a time! . . .

"The startling thing is that such a work should be published under the protection and editorship of a learned dignitary of the Establishment itself, of an officially recognized teacher of theology at a great University, and that it should bear the impress of whatever that Church may be said to possess in the way of authority. I am wondering whether the men who publish, and then recommend and advertise, such a book as this really suppose that intelligent persons, who study their speculations, and who accept them as ascertained truth, will remain Christians, in any definite and intelligible meaning of the term."

This Catholic critic asks the natural and pertinent question, "Can any person, still in possession of the power of clear judgment, and still believing in the supernatural element in Christianity, continue to regard" Anglicanism—after setting forth and sanctioning so rationalistic a work as the "Encyclopædia Biblica"—"as in any intelligible sense part of the traditional and historic Church of the Divine Redeemer? The very notion itself seems to me to be an outrage on human reason, and the circumstance that such

persons still exist can only be accounted for by the assumption that they are either wholly ignorant of what is really going on at the headquarters of their Church, or that they are deliberately shutting their eyes to what they instinctively feel to be a very unpleasant and disquieting, and certainly a very complicated, subject."

"But how wonderfully and strikingly is the divinely-inspired method of the true Church being established and justified by these extraordinary events," continues this able writer; "how frail and human and fallible are the foundations of heresy shown to be! With good reason might we not once more ask that striking question of Cardinal Manning's: 'Take away the Roman Catholic Church, and where is Christianity? In this age, too, echo answers, Where? And reply there is none."*

The Rev. Mr. Hensley Henson, Canon of Westminster and Rector of St. Margaret's, appears to be a somewhat clamorous specimen of Anglican Liberal. He teaches plainly that "much in the primitive accounts of the Resurrection is demonstrably unhistorical." This, of course, is equivalent to saying that certain portions of the New Testament are demonstrably false. In Canon Henson's view, it appears, the Resurrection of Our Lord is something widely different from that which is asserted by St. Paul and taught

* "Back to Rome!" by "Scrutator" (J. Godfrey Raupert), pp. 213-216.

by the Church. He seems to regard the common belief of Christians in Our Lord's Resurrection as "crude, materialistic, unsatisfactory." Whether he would approve of the Virgin Birth seems rather doubtful.†

But the most startling of Canon Henson's strange doctrines is his teaching on the subject of ministerial falsehoods. He teaches, apparently, that Anglican clergymen may utter certain doctrinal statements while retaining no vestige of belief in such doctrines. The law, says Canon Henson, "must enforce a precise aceptance of doctrinal definitions;" but "it can secure nothing more, because it can enforce *nothing more than external confession.*" "In the lower sphere of external action," he says, "the State can enforce its will." In this lower sphere the Anglican clergyman can obey—he can express doctrines in which he retains no belief whatever—as he is acting only "ministerially."

The Liberal Anglican is, therefore (says Canon Knox-Little), "able to do things and say things which he does not in the least believe." Canon Henson encourages the Liberal ecclesiastic by assuring him that his *"concern can never be more than ministerial;"* that he has contracted for "the performance of legally prescribed duties;" that if he does not fulfil them "it is a breach of contract;" but that the law "can enforce *nothing more than external confession.*"

†Knox-Little, "Conflict of Ideals," p. 133.

Hence, as the Worcester Canon sarcastically notes, a Liberal Anglican cleric "is right, spiritual, and loyal, if, having promised *ex animo* assent to doctrinal definitions, he refuses to give it because the law cannot enforce it, and yet to remain in the ministry which he holds subject to that promise!" His duty is to say "I believe" in the Creeds, for instance, though he does not believe in them—for he has "contracted" in his "ministerial" capacity to say them. His duty is to say all that the Anglican Prayer Book puts into his mouth, and he need not believe a word of it! On the same principle, of course, he could perform the entire Communion Service with a "conscientious" disbelief in the whole thing!

As Canon Knox-Little observes, "To untrained, unenlightened minds this peculiar ethical system might appear rather closely related to what Protestant rancor has (rightly or wrongly) attributed to the followers of St. Ignatius." It is no wonder that this lax doctrine "does not appear free from moral taint," and that it "does not seem in accordance with the moral teaching of Christ," in the estimation of the worthy High-Churchman.* One can imagine what fierce charges of duplicity and hypocrisy would have been hurled against the Jesuits if they had ever taught a doctrine of this kind.

*"Conflict of Ideals, pp. 106-110.—In the above references to Canon Henson's views I have closely followed Canon Knox-Little's work.

Dr. Driver is another leading light among Anglican Liberals. The anxious inquirer who desies to know about his Bible will learn from Dr. Driver that "in the first eleven chapters of Genesis there is little or nothing that can be called historical;" and that "the concurrent testimony of geology and astronomy, anthropology, archæology, and comparative philology is proof that the account given in these chapters . . . is no historically true record of these events as they actually happened." This accomplished Anglican Liberal "also instructs us that the Book of Genesis was compiled by somebody who combined certain stories handed on by three persons whom he calls J. and E. and P.

"There is not the slightest evidence that such persons ever existed. But, according to Dr. Driver, they not only wrote down traditions, but they *idealized* them—that is, they recorded as true what was really false; and so Almighty God, who is the Truth, gave His revelation by inspiring pious frauds, and allowing the sacred writings of His Church to be, in great part, a mass of religious fiction."*

After these samples of Liberal heterodoxy, we need not stay to consider the moderate, though harmful, Liberalism of such men as Bishop Gore, Dean Armitage Robinson, and Professor Sanday. Neither need we discuss the various hues and shades of Liberalism that sun themselves in the congenial pages of the

* Ibid., pp. 133-134.

"Hibbert Journal." Anglican Liberals—and their name is legion—are fast verifying the dictum of Canon Liddon: "We have again begun to slide down the hill, towards the pit of uncertainty or unbelief. (Liddon's "Life," p. 364.)

Modern Liberalism recognizes no responsibility for belief; no danger in rejecting the Faith; no sinfulness in heresy. Every sort of doubt is thrown by Liberals —especially by the more "advanced" among them— upon the revealed facts of Our Lord's life. His miracles—if any of them are allowed to exist at all— are sometimes described as myths, sometimes as parables. His Divinity is sometimes openly denied, sometimes craftily and insidiously disparaged. The average man will but too readily conclude that Christ could not be the Divine Teacher, seeing that He stated things as true which Liberal "criticism" pronounces to be false, and often, therefore, misled men when He professed to teach them infallibly.

Having discarded the Church, the Bible (except selections accepted by some of them, but rejected by others), the Creeds, and the historic Christ, the Liberals attempt to weave a Christianity out of their own passing notions and "experiences." A Christianity so constructed is no better than the "baseless fabric of a vision."*

Liberalism is merely another name for Modernism. We have witnessed in our day the summary expulsion

* Knox-Little, "Conflict of Ideals," p. 91.

of Modernism from the Catholic Church's fold. But Anglicanism lacks the power to expel any form of Liberalism, no matter how pernicious, from its own system. Enumerating the "formal, permanent, and substantive schools of error," which exist side by side in the Anglican Church, Cardinal Manning could reckon up no fewer than eight contradictory schools of error within the bosom of that distracted communion. These were "the Protestant, Hierarchical, Romanising, Latitudinarian, Formalistic, Puritan, Oxford, and Rationalistic schools." Under slightly different names, these warring sections still exist in Anglicanism, and the Anglican Church is powerless to declare which is right and which is wrong.

"These forms of religious opinions," continues the venerable Cardinal, "have been gradually evolved from the darkness and chaos created by the Anglican Reformation. Since that period the Anglican Church has been in a state of perpetual flux. Fixedness it has had none from the moment of its separation, when it lost its inherence in the Universal Church by schism, and the influx of its supernatural mind and divine guidance by formal heresy. For, as I have said before, the master heresy of the English race is to deny the presence of an infallible authority upon earth.

"During the eighteen centuries of its existence, the Catholic Church has been tried by the rise of a succession of heresies within its unity. Every century has had its characteristic heresy. From Gnosticism

to Jansenism there is a line of almost unbroken succession in error which has sprung up parasitically by the side of Divine Truth. But the Church has remained steadfast and resplendent, without change or shadow of vicissitude, ever the same, and perfect in its light as in the beginning. The errors of the human intellect have never fastened upon the supernatural intelligence of the mystical Body; but every successive error has been expelled by the vital and vigorous action of the infallible mind and voice of the Church of God."*

* "Sermons on Ecclesiastical Subjects," pp. 55, 56.